

Patrick Henningsen: Iran's Message to Trump – Ships Turning Back Near Hormuz

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Thursday, April 30th, 2026, and our dear friend and brother, Patrick Henningsen, is here with us. Welcome back, Pat.

#Patrick

Great to be with you, Nima.

#Nima

Pat, let's start with what's going on with the call. We had the Iranian foreign minister going to St. Petersburg, meeting with Vladimir Putin. Then later on, we had the phone call, which it seems that Vladimir Putin made to Donald Trump. They talked about what's going on, both in Ukraine and in the Middle East. And here is what Donald Trump said about that phone call.

#Speaker 03

Progress in the space area.

#Speaker 04

I didn't talk about space. I talked about Ukraine, and I talked a little bit about Iran. I talked about a few different subjects, mostly about Ukraine. And we had a very good conversation. I think we're going to come up with a solution relatively quickly, I hope. I think he'd like to see a solution, I can tell you, and that's good. He told me he'd like to be involved with the enrichment, if he can help us get it. I said, I'd much rather have you be involved with ending the war with Ukraine. To me, that

would be more important because we're going to have that. Look, Ukraine, militarily, they're defeated. Yeah.

#Nima

Patrick, in your opinion, what does Donald Trump want from Russia, and what does Russia want from the United States in both conflicts, in Ukraine and in the Middle East? And how did you find the call? We don't know. Nobody's talking about it. I have seen a briefing on the Russian website, the Kremlin website, but there is nothing in that briefing that shows what the real objectives of that call were. Your understanding of that.

#Patrick

One most important question, Nima, is who initiated the call? Who initiated the call? Was it Russia or was it the United States? Similar question: who initiated the ceasefire with Iran on April 6th or April 8th? I'm not sure what the date was, but was that Iran or was that the United States? I think the answer to both of those questions is the same. It's the United States. So it's very important who initiated the call. And I think it was, that looked like to me personally, a panic phone call from the White House after the meeting with Abbas Araqchi and Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg. That's my reading of it, just the timing. I don't think that's a coincidence. The Ukraine conflict, it's not even on the map geopolitically or in the news cycle. And as we know with Donald Trump, everything's about the news cycle.

I'm sure he'd like to get a win in Ukraine or something. He could take credit for ending the war after not ending the war for the last 14, 15, going on 15 months very shortly. So I'm sure he would like that. But Russia doesn't want anything from the U.S. other than something productive. So it goes back to the original point with the Ukraine story — Russia's been very, very persistent in their demands. And they want the United States and their delegation to address the root causes of the conflict. Because if you don't, it's common sense — if you don't address the root causes of the conflict, then you can't possibly even pretend to be able to chart a course towards an armistice or a binding agreement or political settlement at the end. It's just impossible because you can't agree on the premise of how the thing started to begin with, legally and so forth.

So this is where the U.S. will never be able to meet the Russians on that point. They can't, because the U.S. started the war in Ukraine. That's the point. The U.S. did. The EU did. NATO did. They started the war in Ukraine, and that's a fact. And there was a U.N. Security Council Resolution 2202 that more or less admits that. In other words, there was a peace process, and the Europeans and the Americans basically sabotaged it because they wanted this war to happen in Ukraine. So that's an established fact, at least from the Russian side. They understand that, obviously. But the U.S. and the West will never... I think it would be very difficult for them to ever admit it, at least with the current administrations we have, governments in Washington and in Brussels.

I think it's impossible. If a Democrat government came into Washington, they would never address the root causes because they would have to basically impale Barack Obama and Joe Biden on the cross of geopolitical responsibility for starting that conflict. So the Russians — I think the conversation the Russians and the Iranians had in Moscow — I think there's a real meeting of the minds because both countries, both governments, have gone through a similar experience here.

And both of them are in a similar position vis-à-vis the United States and the Western power structure, whereby these are both basically untoward, dead-end wars of aggression that have been waged, and proxy wars whereby Ukraine plays a similar role, in a sense, to Israel — where it's being used, in a way, as the American proxy against Iran. Although Iran is a direct adversary and existential threat to the state of Israel in terms of its legitimacy in the region, Iran's been able to bleed out the U.S. economy and part of its military-industrial complex as a result of this conflict. And Israel is also playing that, trying to bleed out the Iranians, and it hasn't worked.

Similarly, Ukraine has tried to bleed out Russia on behalf of the West, and it hasn't worked. But Russia's bled out the European economy and the legitimacy of its political leadership as a result of this war. So when the Iranians and the Russians get together, they're in this very similar chess match. And their interests converge. Their interests converge. And I think you're now seeing Russia move very slowly. And Russia's learned its lessons from being actively involved in West Asia. And Russia came to the aid of Syria, to the Syrian Arab Republic, in 2015. In the fall, October 2015, they intervened, and they turned the tide of that conflict that was very much going against the Assad government at the time.

And Russia put in a major commitment in terms of its air force and also reinforcing its warm-water port in Tartus. Geopolitically, the war on terror, from Russia's standpoint, they could see that was a really important battle to fight — that they could wipe out a lot of the terrorist forces there, help Syria, and that would weaken those same Western-backed terror forces that are a threat to the Russian underbelly in the Caucasus, aside from preserving its geopolitical positioning at Tartus. Okay, so you could see, but the problem was, the reason this wasn't successful in the long term is because the Syrian army collapsed, the state of Syria collapsed. And it collapsed under sanctions.

It collapsed under just general destabilization of a dirty war that was waged against Syria for like 12 or 13 years running. And it led to the collapse of their state, and the head of state, Bashar al-Assad, fled to Moscow. But Russia couldn't step forward and fight a war on behalf of Syria if Syria itself wasn't able to fight that war. And it couldn't economically prop up Syria, although it tried to make inroads in that direction over the course of decades because of internal politics in Syria. Syria has its own corruption. Syria is also basically vulnerable to all sorts of subterfuge from both the U.S. and Israel, especially in its weakened state. So all of that converged to see the collapse in the Syrian Arab Army and the Syrian government and the state.

Russia can't fight that war against all of these forces — HTS, Turkey, NATO, Israel — on behalf of Damascus if Damascus can't take the lead. So Damascus' sovereignty was massively eroded because

of sanctions, Caesar sanctions, and repeated airstrikes by the Israelis over a decade of airstrikes. So that was the lesson of Syria for Russia. Now you have the Iranian delegation arriving in Russia, and what you're seeing there is Vladimir Putin looking at the Iranians, saying, you're fighting this war now. You're still standing. You've defended your sovereignty. You have withstood sanctions. It's different — Iran's much stronger, much more resilient — 47 years of sanctions and threats and attacks and so forth. So this is a very different conversation.

So now Russia's probably in a more confident position to aid Iran in certain ways. And one of those ways, I'm sure, is on intelligence, also satellite data — very, very important. Very, very important, especially with the new range of hypersonic missiles, much of which I don't believe Iran has unveiled, all of its battlefield technology. And this is what I'm going to say to people, Nima — and I had some close to firsthand knowledge of this when I was in Tehran — a member of the missile program was speaking to journalists, and I was there present. And he said, you know, we have missiles, high-altitude missiles that can redirect mid-flight and can change direction multiple times and hit moving targets.

So I'm sure he was referring to naval vessels in that sense. So in the age of AI, that is just basically, Nima, a question of data. So the U.S. also has some of this. On the AI side, the technology is being used to track what they call shadow fleets or dark fleets. The U.S. is using this. It's combining radar, AIS data, transponder data, and other positioning techniques. And what it does is synthesize all of this various data to predict the estimated time of arrival of a naval vessel, its heading, speed, its positioning, all of that. Weather, all of that comes in. And it can predict movement up to 95% probability. So this data, it's just a question of accumulating enough data to be able to profile U.S. destroyers and aircraft carriers.

And the longer they sit and loiter in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, it does give the Iranians a lot more time to analyze and to prepare. And it's just, at that point, a software issue in terms of guidance and targeting. And with 95% probability — which the U.S. has these — they use the same systems for different things that they do militarily, mainly for piracy at the moment. But Iran doesn't have a big, clunky navy that they're moving around the planet, so it's not really an issue for Iran, but for America it is an issue. Because the longer they loiter, the more time Iran has to implement types of solutions that would probably really handicap the United States because they're so reliant on naval power.

And in terms of that, there's no more staging other than Ben Gurion Airport, Cyprus, and a couple of others — Djibouti, and maybe a base in Saudi, which is also problematic for the Saudis, obviously. There's not a lot in terms of staging and support from the U.S. because Iran has wiped out a lot of those bases and the ability for those bases to function as military facilities. So that means everything's on naval power at that point. So a couple of clues: one is that we had three carrier strike groups in the region last week. As of the end of last week, the USS Gerald Ford was positioned in the northern Red Sea. And to me, that was very likely that it would have been twofold in function.

One would be—threefold, actually—possibly to provide interceptor defense to protect Saudi's port at Yanbu from the east-west petrol line that bypasses the Persian Gulf. And that's the Saudi lifeline, basically, economically, with the Straits of Hormuz closed. So it would provide that, plus defend Israel against incoming from Iran. So it was positioned to provide protection for that, and also for Houthi from Yemen—any of the Houthis using missiles to target the Eilat port, for instance, or other targets in Israel—they would be in an ideal position to intercept. And then you had the USS George H.W. Bush coming, I believe, around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, trying to avoid the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. So it's in position, as well as, I believe, the USS Abraham Lincoln.

I think it's the third carrier strike group, and that's on the edge of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. So there were three. Now there are only two. The USS Gerald Ford was recalled this weekend, or early this week, back to Norfolk, Virginia. So, and... these would be used as relays, these carrier groups. You've got air refueling for missions. You've got planes that might take off from one carrier and land on another. There's a lot of moving parts because this operation is getting more sophisticated, because the United States does not have the facilities it did before in terms of mounting these attacks. So I would say their margin of error militarily is much less, and also the strike window would also be less.

So you're looking at a two-week campaign whereby they would probably have to expend what they can in terms of standoff munitions in the first week. And they still have to leave reserves for other theaters and for contingency, so they can't use everything. So I would estimate that would be like maybe a week, two max. But then they'd have to go into airstrikes after that. And because their idea is they would take out the remainder of Iran's air defense capabilities and then move in closer with fighter strikes with Israel. And that would be glide bombs and overflights, direct overflights and so forth. But we're still talking about a short campaign. We're talking about a hammer blow, as the White House would call it—two weeks. And that kind of coincides with the CENTCOM briefing reports that we see, Nima.

This is what the president's been briefed on exactly. But the withdrawal of the Gerald Ford, to me, is slightly problematic, potentially. I'm not sure how they would replace that or if they would replace that, so I'm worried about that in terms of this attack, whether that's even feasible from that point of view. So, end result, Nima, we can talk about the ins and outs of this. It's a hell of a poker gamble for Trump. And politically, this is it. The longer they wait, the attack could happen, Nima, today or tomorrow or Saturday or Sunday, after the markets close, before the markets open on Monday. But still a huge political gamble. But the longer the delay, the more unsavory this becomes in America, because right now you're seeing a barrage of reports in America about poor economic performance.

GDP numbers have come in way, way below expectations, 2%. And this quarter's will be even lower than 2%, but that won't be reported until the end of next month or the beginning of June. And you're going to see this inevitable downward trajectory of the U.S. economy in the run-up to the midterms. So for Trump, there's limited opportunity here. And the best, I would say the best they

can achieve here is they're not going to reopen the Straits of Hormuz. I mean, they could try, but that would come at a huge cost, one way or another. It would come at a huge cost militarily if it didn't go perfectly correct. So there's not a lot in terms of benefit, potential benefits here, like clear victories.

I mean, you could declare a Pyrrhic victory, destroying Iran's infrastructure, destroying the civilians. But that Pyrrhic victory, as King Pyrrhus learned in 280 BC, comes at a massive cost, which is that the more Pyrrhic victories you achieve, the worse your reputation and standing become, and you become weaker strategically. And that was the lesson many millennia ago, and this is still the lesson today with the Trump administration. But this administration in the U.S. would be happy with a Pyrrhic victory, declare victory somehow, no peace agreement, and just keep the war burning in the background. And the U.S. and Israel would reserve the option to strike again at any time in the future, as and when they decided to reinvigorate this conflict or not.

It depends. But the problem, Nima, with all of this is there's no way you'll get any kind of agreement for any kind of a deal or any kind of peace treaty with this U.S. administration. It's impossible. In the political climate, there will be no sanctions relief or anything like that from any U.S. government, Democrat or Republican, unless there's some major political crisis in America, you know, some major destabilization event politically in America. Then, you know, the politics might open up enough to say, let's just bring an end to this conflict with Iran. But if that doesn't happen, then, you know, sanctions relief—they could still play the uranium enrichment card. You know, Putin, of course, he's always available.

Russia's always available. So that's a reset to the JCPOA, with Russia being the guarantor. But Trump's whole sales pitch is, I have to get a better deal than Obama had. So the JCPOA won't cut it. A redux of the JCPOA won't be enough for Trump to be able to claim that his deal is better than the deal that he yanked in his first term. So the U.S. and this Trump administration have painted themselves into the worst possible corner. There is really no way out. They're too far into this. They've invested way too much political capital and economic capital, internationally and domestically. It's been a massive failure, this operation—politically, geopolitically. From an imperial point of view, Nima, the U.S.'s reputation has just gone down.

They're chained to Israel, and that Titanic is going to the bottom. And the U.S., unfortunately, is going with them because of this conflict. So the more pain you see in Europe, the more economic pain in America and in Southeast Asia, the whole world is going to blame the U.S. and Israel for this. So that's inescapable. Yeah, rescuing it with some gallant military operation that will last two weeks—is that the best card? Is that the best hand they play? Trump says, I have all the cards, constantly saying, we've got all the cards. They have no cards. They have cards, but Trump's got a pair of sevens, which will become a pair of jokers in two weeks. And Iran can just sit back. They're not playing poker. Iran's not playing poker.

They're playing chess, and they're playing a long-term game because for them it's an existential issue. But the U.S. doesn't realize it. They don't think it's an existential issue, but in the Pyrrhic victory sense, it is an existential issue for the United States. And I think the die is cast already. Even if they brought it to a close today, signed some miracle deal, you know, Trump sort of—you know, the clouds parted and, you know, Jesus Trump came down from the sky in his doctor's robe—it's too late. You're going to get hyperinflationary forces that are just unavoidable at this point, that's going to push right into 2027. There's no way around it. And it's cataclysmic. And even if it ended now, and that's what I don't think the media quite get in America. I don't think the White House quite understands that.

I think there's some magic Adam Smith invisible, resilient hand that's going to catch America while it's falling here. But the experts are all basically the markets—the oil markets, for starters—and the inflation rates. It's not looking good. You see a contraction. There's a lot of panic in Washington, especially in this administration. It's trying to blame a lot of this on the Fed because the Fed wants to raise interest rates to try to slow down these inflationary pressures. The Trump administration doesn't want to do that. They want to open up, lower the interest rates, and raise liquidity and all this other stuff. But something's got to give. They're not going to be able to manage this. I'm half thinking this administration is going to attempt some kind of a massive bailout as a reaction.

And it could come in different forms. We already saw the U.S. is proposing a bailout for the UAE. So it's like we need to bail out our allies in the Persian Gulf. The UAE is withdrawing from OPEC as well, so that's an interesting development. Those price stabilization mechanisms in terms of the global oil market have kind of been thrown up in the air if the UAE withdraws from OPEC. That's clearly something the United States is potentially behind. So I don't know how that's going to shake out in the long run, but it means that, in terms of volatility and price consistency and all of these things—like consistency, volatility—these are major factors in the global economy because you start to see the tightening up of the economy.

If investors and capital don't have clarity in the markets, clarity in where they're going to be putting their money, then there's going to be a contraction in trade, in investment, in all of these things. And if the only safe haven right now is China, where's the capital going? It's going to go to Asia. It's going to see that as a safe haven. And so you're going to see capital leaving the West and going East. And that's been happening for a while, actually. But it's going to accelerate if the U.S. and Europe continue down this suicidal—I would say suicidal—path that they're currently on.

#Nima

You know, the more they're asking questions, the more you see the confusion is getting deeper in the Trump administration. Yesterday, Pete Hegseth was asked, he was asked, what was the main

objective of the second round of war if you obliterated in the first round the Iranian nuclear program? And he simply said that the desire is there because we want to, you know, it's unbelievable. Here is what he said. Just play out the video.

#Speaker 05

Never happened.

#Speaker 06

So they haven't broken yet. OK, we haven't gotten there yet for all of it.

#Speaker 05

Well, their nuclear facilities have been obliterated underground. They're buried and watched 24/7. So we know where any nuclear material is. Reclaiming my time. We're watching a second here.

#Speaker 06

We had to start this war, you just said, 60 days ago, because the nuclear weapon was an imminent threat. Now you're saying that it was completely obliterated?

#Speaker 05

They had not given up their nuclear ambitions, and they had a conventional shield of thousands of—

#Speaker 06

So Operation Midnight Hammer accomplished nothing of substance. It left us exactly where we were before.

#Speaker 05

So much so, their facilities are bombed and obliterated, their ambitions continued, and they're building a conventional shield. Let me try again. It's the North Korea strategy. You know this very well, the North Korea...

#Nima

It's nonsense. He said ambition, the desire is there. How can you measure that? The guy is putting out something that you cannot measure. There is nothing of reality there to be discussed, and that's why it's getting more confused. And they're somehow feeling, literally they're feeling they're putting a lot of pressure on Iran with this blockade. I don't see that. You know, they really feel that. And

today we've seen, you know, the head of the Iranian parliament putting out this—how can you imagine you can control—because Iran has, look at the borders of Iran, look at the north, east, west, and even in the south, they cannot control everything.

This is the problem that it doesn't seem the Trump administration understands. And Scott Besant said that the new regime, the economic fury that they're putting on Iran, these sorts of sanctions, or they're trying to find the accounts of Iranian officials, I don't know, some government accounts outside of Iran. This is just unbelievable. I don't know who's going to buy these sorts of lies, but they're trying to do their best. And is there anybody buying these sorts of arguments?

#Patrick

It's very similar to the sort of anti-Russia hysteria, believing it can just sanction and sanction and sanction and just keep going. That's the whole point of the Magnitsky sanctions, which, again, are based on a false narrative of the story of Sergei Magnitsky, which is a completely fabricated myth perpetrated by the likes of Bill Browder and other U.S. and British operatives in order to get the U.S. legislation to pass these personalized sanctions that they can just kind of continuously level against various and sundry targets, which is what they did in Syria with the Caesar sanctions. The same thing—a fabricated story about the Caesar photos used as the basis for U.S. legislation to weaponize the Treasury Department to massive levels.

And so Iran, they're going to start using these tools continuously against Iran. And they haven't worked against Russia, but they did work against Syria, though it took twelve years for that to happen. They're not going to get that result with Iran. Iran is more similar to Russia in this sense, in that it's much bigger, much more resilient, it has more resilient institutions, it has a much more resilient domestic industry, an array of industries, and also it has overland allies and trading partners—namely Iraq, Pakistan, and others. Not so much Azerbaijan, but Russia. Russia's not far away from Iran. It's a hop, skip, and a jump over Azerbaijan and Georgia. Russia's right there.

They're practically neighbors anyway if you consider the Caspian Basin. So you're not going to be able to strangle Iran the way they strangled Syria. You could strangle Syria, and they did eventually, but they don't have that ability with Iran. And as you said, with the blockade, Pete Hegseth is panicking there. You see, it's a real basic question. I mean, if you're really skilled and you know you actually have an argument, you could very easily navigate those very sort of average questions coming from U.S. senators. But you can see he doesn't have anything. He himself has no idea about what the objectives are other than just to flex U.S. muscle and show how tough you are and destroy this, that, and the other.

That's some kind of achievement. And the nuclear narrative falls. It just collapses right there in front of everybody with one question. And you can see Pete Hegseth just panicking. You know, he just kind of made a fool out of himself, as if he hasn't done it already. But he really made a fool out of himself because he can't even defend his position. Why is the Secretary of Defense making political

arguments in front of the Senate? That's just strange in itself. It tells you there's too much power concentrated in his office, and you don't see the Secretary of State being grilled on the veracity of the political claims at all, because Marco Rubio is AWOL pretty much on the Iran thing.

He might do a few sit-down interviews with some soundbites and talking points about how bad the Iranians are and the rest of it, but he should be grilled on policy in front of the Senate. But instead, it's the Secretary of War who's taking on this role as chief communications officer for the Trump administration and for the United States war machine. That's the kind of role Pete Hegseth is playing. But if they prosecute this war in Yemen, they're not going to be able to open the Straits of Hormuz. That blockade, as you rightly point out, is not sustainable. It's not effective. And every day we're seeing reports about Iranian ships passing through the blockade, but you don't even need to pass through the U.S. blockade. You can just bypass it by sailing along the coastline eastward or westward.

So there's limited things they can do. The U.S. doesn't even have operational control of the Bab al-Mandab Strait. That's another big fear that the U.S. has — they have to basically, it's not enough to control the Strait of Hormuz, but you also have to control the Bab al-Mandab Strait. Otherwise, it's not really a big win from a U.S. point of view. Not that they'd be able to do that, but let's say we go to war, Nima, and this goes for a couple of weeks, and they don't get control of the Strait of Hormuz. That's a crushing defeat for the United States. That's a military defeat. It's a political defeat, a military defeat, a geopolitical defeat, and an economic defeat. So in what universe is this a win? Or is there any kind of real tangible benefit for the United States here?

The only benefit is, I guess you could say, Israel has used the United States to weaken Iran, like Europe has used Ukraine to weaken Russia but hasn't really weakened Russia. And strategically, I don't think Iran is that much weaker as a result of the conflict. It has been damaged and suffered greatly, but strategically, I don't think any of its strategic endowments have been eliminated. I think Iran, strategically, is stronger after 60 days of war, one would argue. And the trip for the Iranian delegation to St. Petersburg to meet Vladimir Putin — that was a meeting of equals, Nima — because Iran has been through the fires now, and they have defended their borders. They have defended their sovereignty against two of the most powerful militaries on the planet, conventional forces, the U.S. and Israel.

And they're still standing, and they've created leverage for themselves. So Russia sees a confident partner there. Now, if Russia invests in Iran, if China invests in Iran in terms of supporting them in any way they can, they know it's a good investment, or at least there's a good chance of being successful, because Iran is willing to stand up for itself. And there are very few countries on the planet that could do that against such overwhelming force. So that, to me, is the story. Historically, that's the big story. But, you know, it's still not going to wash away the horrors of escalation if the United States and Israel choose to escalate.

It's just going to be really messy, violent, tragic. And it's going to be bad for everybody in the region — the Gulf states, not least of all, but Iran and its civilian population and its government and leadership that will be targeted — targeted assassinations and bombings and so forth. So that's tragic. But Israel will also receive, I think, a beating by the Iranians if they decide to go with the United States. This is the whole point, Nima. It's this... They've trained the West to think that this is the U.S. versus Iran and that Israel's tied up with Hezbollah. No, no. The U.S. and Israel are joint partners.

They're coordinating their military attacks on Iran. And the U.S. is coordinating with Israel to attack Lebanon. They're not independent actors, not at all. The U.S. is also coordinating attacks in Gaza for the last two and a half years. So this part of the deception of all this is to get the public in the West to separate the United States from Israel militarily, when in fact they're absolutely fused together and working as one force, kind of effort. And they're able to do this fake WWE WrestleMania act, pretending to be different, you know, different, but, you know, tag team partners or whatever. No, it's the same military actor.

And that's allowed them a lot of leeway to deceive, I think, and the U.S. to play negotiations and pretend that Israel is the rabid dog in the junkyard and on a leash. But the Iranians understand all of this now. It's all been priced into the equation. Just like the Russians understand the true relationship between the United States and NATO and Ukraine, Russia is under no illusions. But they'll play the diplomatic game, a performative game, just like Iran has to play the diplomatic game with the U.S. performatively, because they just have to for optics. But they're not stupid. I think they know exactly what they're dealing with. They're a two-headed snake, basically.

#Nima

I think Russia somehow understands what's going on with the Trump administration. If they couldn't get a deal so far, it would be hugely difficult to get it, you know, in the days ahead or in the months ahead, because it's not just about the conflict in Ukraine. It's the way that the United States sees Russia. It's the way that in the Trump administration, they're not going to be, you know, more than three years of Trump's presidency. Then what? What would be the outcome? You know, whatever Donald Trump does, I think after all, it's going to get back to the same old policies against Russia. And Russia totally understands that. And that's why what is happening in the Middle East, what is happening in Ukraine, they want to find some sort of permanent solution. But there is no permanent solution to that, Patrick. This is the answer.

I would say with the case of Iran, the way that Iran pictured the negotiation, the talks, the first step, not only ending permanently the war between Iran and the United States, but between Israel and Lebanon. It's impossible to put an end to the war between Israel and Lebanon. It's almost impossible. Today, we know that they're attacking each other right now as we talk. Today, we've learned from Israeli Channel 11. They said that Israel has issued orders to withdraw several combat

brigades from southern Lebanon due to FPV drone attacks on the part of Hezbollah. The attack is going on. Everything is happening as we talk. And Donald Trump doesn't show any sort of leverage, any sort of power to put an end to that. He's begging right now. He's begging the president of Israel to pardon Benjamin Netanyahu. Just imagine. This huge mess is happening. He's doing something.

#Patrick

That's a big one. That's a big one because that indicates that Trump needs Netanyahu to be viable politically. That is an indication, Nima, of the resumption of the conflict, that intervention by Trump. So that's a desperate move by Trump and Netanyahu equally. It's a desperate move to maintain his political viability because they're fighting a war on multiple fronts. As you said, in Lebanon as well as Iran, you can't separate these two conflicts. Iran's smart. They understand that. This is why they tried to pull the Lebanese question into the negotiations as part of the framework, and very cleverly, I might add, because Iran knows that if you separate those two things, Israel can still use the threat of violence against the Lebanese as leverage against the Iranians.

So very cleverly, Iran, you're trying to play chess with Iran, and I think Iran has proven to everybody, they've proven to the world that they can deal diplomatically, and they can also deal militarily, and they can deal in deterrence. Iran has done something that's, to me, extraordinary. I don't know if anyone's been able to do this in a military conflict before. Russia has come close with Ukraine by causing an economic collapse, causing the West to initiate its own economic collapse in Europe. But Iran has done this globally, that they brought the war to everybody in the world in a way that the closest thing I could think of is before the fall of apartheid South Africa, how the ANC managed to bring that issue to the world in order to get the call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions for the apartheid regime in South Africa.

And then that initiated the collapse of apartheid in South Africa. But how they were able to internationalize that in a relatively short period of time at the end, intensely, it managed to bring that issue to the world and bring that pressure to bear on the region for a solution, a political settlement, which happened and was successful. So Iran's been able to create a global situation here, and it's not—it's ugly, trust me. You know, I'm in America, we're gonna hit our inflationary cycles that are just about spinning out of control right now. And they will go into hyperdrive in the next 60 days, that's for sure. And it's not great. It's going to be cataclysmic for a lot of businesses and a lot of people.

But it's a direct result of the situation in this war of choice by the U.S. and Israel. So Iran has just proven what it can do internationally to defend its own interests, to bring that pressure globally. And so you're dealing right there, because of its geopolitical disposition. I mean, it's funny, the only off-ramp to this would be that the U.S. would have to voluntarily step down from its position of global hegemon, to voluntarily relinquish its position or its perceived position as the world superpower. That's not going to happen in the next three years, not under this president, if he stays in office. So I don't see any way out here, just the same with Ukraine.

It's so funny that, again, when Putin and Abbas Araqchi are looking at each other in St. Petersburg, they don't even need to say a word to each other. They understand each other 100%. They understand what each other has been through, and they understand why each of them is still standing. And that's why I think that was a very powerful, symbolic meeting, and that initiated the phone call between Trump and Putin. And what's Donald Trump going to say to Vladimir Putin? He said publicly the exact same script he said a year ago. I think he'd like to come to a solution. I think we can do something very soon. That's exactly what, after the phone call, was just over a year ago, you know, 14 months ago. Same. No progress at all. No chance of any progress either.

It's just performative diplomacy or pseudo-diplomacy on the part of Washington to make it look like there's progress when there's no progress to be made at all. And I think they're in the same—the U. S. is in the same position with Iran. They're in the same position with Iran. And they're in the same position, quite frankly, with Lebanon, right? It's just the U.S.'s role in Lebanon is very insidious. They're trying to foment a civil war. Trump's envoy, Tom Barrack, is actively pushing for a civil war. That seems to be the U.S. and Israel's only real solution in Lebanon—to create enough external pressure to cause the parties within Lebanon to fight each other internally in a violent way. And then Israel did exactly what it did during the previous Lebanese civil war, which was move in as an opportunity to try to take territory and further degrade the political system in Lebanon.

And the United States didn't support them in that effort so directly back in the late 1970s and 1980s, but they certainly didn't oppose them. And it was the Lebanese having to fight. It was Hezbollah, which was born—to take a term from Hala Jabber's great book on Hezbollah—born with a vengeance in the early 1980s, for the sole purpose of their existence was to evict this illegal occupation of South Lebanon that the Israelis did. Violent, brutal, illegal occupation. That's why Hezbollah exists. But because if you fight against Israel, Nima, you're labeled as a terrorist. If you're Palestinian, if you're Lebanese, if you're Iranian, or if you're Iraqi, you fight against the US or Israel, you get the terrorist label.

And that frames the global conversation. But those of us in the region, or those who have been to the region, those who live in the region, they know what the real story is. This is not a terrorist organization. It's a local armed liberation struggle that's protecting its borders because its U.S.-controlled government in Beirut can't protect its borders. Because the U.S. has made sure, because of the Israeli lobby in the U.S., that Lebanon cannot have a modern military, cannot have air defense. No air defense allowed. That's part of the provisions.

That is a U.S. provision because Israel wants to have full use of Lebanese airspace, and they needed that to destroy Syria, and they used it for 10 years. Israel was al-Qaeda and ISIS's air force for over a decade in the dirty war on Syria. They flew thousands of sorties, hitting targets, claiming that they were fighting terrorism, you know, because Hezbollah was helping, as well as the Quds Forces from

Iran. But because they were labeled terrorists, that was permissible, according to the Europeans and the Americans, for Israel to be using Lebanese airspace to destroy these airports in Syria, infrastructure, military positions, etc.

So that's how this whole region fits together. And people in the region know this. They understand this. But the way it's filtered through to the West is a completely different reality that we get in the West. Most people don't even know, in terms of a reality-based analysis, what's actually going on, especially in the Levant. But I would say, you know, in all of West Asia, full stop. That's a big problem. And you see that reflected in the words and the sort of ignorance of all the U.S. politicians and so-called diplomats and national security people. They don't understand any of this, or they have to define their region through a U.S. lens or an Israeli lens.

They cannot look at anything objectively, and you know what, that's fine for a while, and that's kind of worked for the imperial largesse. But in the long term, now we're seeing the real paradigm shifts happening in the region, and that kind of having your own propaganda lenses on is now a major handicap for the U.S. and for the West, just like the anti-Russian lenses that the West has had have been to their detriment. And they've constantly underestimated Russia's capabilities and the professionalism and the thoroughness of the Russian military, and Russia's very, very focused geopolitical aims. And they've constantly written them off and underestimated them. And look where they are as a result.

Look where they are. It's destroying the West. And to stop people like Jacques Baud and people like us from pointing out the truth, the governments in Europe have to limit free speech so that people aren't pointing out this obvious reality. Just like the U.S. is now moving very aggressively, the Trump administration, against the press or the media that's critical of the war, Trump's war effort in Iran. So the empire is destroying itself from within in order to preserve the propaganda perspective of these geopolitical theaters. And Iran is the biggest one right now. There's a whole stack of lies that hold up the reasons for the war in Iran, and they're starting to collapse, as you could see with Pete Hegseth.

That is part of the collapse of their narrative. And so what will this administration do? What will the U.S. do to preserve that kind of fictional narrative version of reality that justifies all of this spending and the amount of money that the U.S. is burning through to pay for all this, and then plus the obligations going forward? I mean, I just saw a report naming the U.S. military, the U.S. Coast Guard, which is one of the branches of the U.S. military. It's on the verge of collapse because Trump hasn't been paying their bills. They've got financial obligations that have gone unpaid to suppliers and all sorts of other financial obligations that they just haven't met. So there's a cash flow issue in the U.S. empire.

Yes, they've said we have \$1.7 billion in terms of a military budget increase, but that money hasn't come through yet. They can't even fund the Department of Homeland Security. I think they just passed some kind of emergency funding package for the DHS to stop the shutdown. But you know

what I mean? It's like that costs \$250 billion. That's a quarter of a trillion dollars — the Department of Homeland Security, just the DHS. That's a quarter of a trillion just to keep the doors open for that. We didn't even have that before 9/11. The U.S. has never been invaded, and it will never be invaded, most likely. But that's the sort of money that's required to keep this. It just grows and grows and grows — the U.S. defense and security apparatus — to the point now, now you're seeing the system really break down.

And they're wanting to, you know, re-leverage and whatever bailout is on the way. I don't know. There's going to have to be some kind of financial bailout in the U.S., and probably they'll have to bail out their allies in Europe or in the Gulf. Because the U.S. started this war, and the Gulf has been damaged badly because of it. Well, they're going to expect bailouts from the U.S., and the U.S. is going to be obligated to somehow provide a rescue package to them, and they'll sell it to the American public saying this is to help stabilize energy prices or backstop the economy. I don't know how they're going to sell this, but they kind of have to do it because those countries have no way of getting foreign currency reserves.

They'll need dollars in order to buy one, in order to sell their oil to China or whatever. I mean, it's a mess. This is an absolute mess. And this is Trump's legacy. He's going to go down in history, Nima, as the Anthony Eden of the U.S. Empire — just how Eden went down as the collapse of the British Empire, losing control of the Middle East. Trump's legacy will be the U.S. president that lost control of the Middle East and had to leave. And it's much bigger than Ronald Reagan just vacating Lebanon after the Marine barracks bombing in 1982. This is much bigger for the U.S. historically. That's Trump's legacy. It's inescapable. And I hope that's his only legacy at this point, because it could, as we both know, it could be worse. But let's just say we'd be happy with that.

#Nima

Yeah. Patrick, I just imagine you have the Biden administration starting the war in Ukraine, and you see the difference between the two administrations. The Biden administration was totally, you know, backing the war in Ukraine, starting the war in Ukraine. You know, Biden himself and his administration decided not to respond to those letters that Russia sent in December 2021. They started the war because of that. They didn't want any sort of communication later on, with sending, you know, the British prime minister to Istanbul. But in the Middle East, you see the policy of Joe Biden was supporting Israel and destroying Gaza, the West Bank, even attacking Lebanon.

But it was some sort of red line for them to go to war against Iran. They didn't go that far. But here comes Donald Trump. He doesn't put an end to the conflict in Ukraine; he starts a new war. And you see everything, you know, from the point of view of American people who wanted some sort of change from the Trump administration — it's disastrous. But from the point of view of Russians and Iranians, they're just learning how capable they are and how they can be effective, you know, more

powerful, how they can change their future. I think that's the reality of what's going on. The outcome of these two administrations — the disastrous policy of these two administrations — is making these two nations called Russia and Iran more powerful, stronger than before.

You know, they're achieving something that I think is going to be written in history for these two administrations — how they made Russia a superpower, even stronger than it was before this war started in Ukraine. And Iran, I see the same thing happening to Iran. If you look at the meeting that the military commanders of Russia and Iran had in Kyrgyzstan, they were talking about how they can communicate with military equipment, how they can be more independent, how they can improve the military-industrial complex. This is a new era for those countries, for these two countries, in my opinion, which would lead to... I think the experience that Iran had, the experience that Russia had in Ukraine, is hugely important for China and how they can communicate with China. It's unbelievably important. And these two administrations just helped these nations to fight, to stand on their feet.

#Patrick

Yeah. If I'm China right now, or if I'm Russia, and I'm looking at a place, a good investment in terms of my security, my future, the future of the Middle Corridor going down through via Iran, via the Caspian Sea, via Iran, to link up with India as an example, in the broader Chinese Belt and Road network, that's a good investment for me if I'm Russia or China. Iran's a good investment. I know if I put my money there, I'm going to get value back. I'm going to get influence. I know that in the future, any major decisions in that region, I have to go through Tehran, at least in part. It's just unavoidable. So that's going to have to happen in the future. So that's where — this is where the other superpowers have to be. And quite frankly, the United States is going to have to join in on that. They have to talk — they're going to have to, honestly, at some point, talk to Iran.

But the Trump-Israeli view is that, no, we're going to obliterate Tehran. We're going to send it back to the Stone Age. Rather than have any normalized relations with the country — no, we need to send it to the Stone Age. We need to obliterate that country. That's not really a sustainable policy going forward. If the U.S. wants to be coexisting with other countries in the world, if the U.S. needs these, they need those countries on various different levels. They need cooperation. The U.S. needs cooperation with Russia, and they need uranium from Russia to power their AI revolution. That's for starters, for instance. So everyone needs each other. One of the biggest lies, Nima, is that globalization has failed. You hear people like charlatans, like Howard Lutnick. These are high-class con artists, part of the Epstein class.

Globalization has failed. We need to bring it all under the American umbrella and control it all, whatever. No, there's always going to be globalization. Unless you want to be permanently at war all the time with everybody, you need to cooperate. We need multilateral institutions. We need agreements. Treaties need to be respected. Otherwise, nobody can function on this planet unless they think that they're just going to be able to carve up all of these competing spheres of influence

and blocs into a world map that sort of looks more like George Orwell's 1984 map. If that's their compelling future for the world, that's not a very good sales pitch for the human race.

It might be for these neoconservative and Zionist regimes and this corrupt Fourth Reich, if you will, in Brussels. It might be okay for them now, but for the majority of the world's population, that's not really going to suffice. It's not really going to work for everybody. So, you know, we have... we've got all these big questions to consider as well. And beyond that, I would think that the future is going to be charted by which way I think the global capital is going to be moving. And right now, I just see an overwhelming trend that global capital is going to be shifting eastwards, specifically to Asia. So no amount of political haranguing or strong-arming or terror wars is going to change that.

It's just an inevitability. And it's a direct result, Nima, of the actions of the West, ironically — of the weaponization of the U.S. dollar, of sanctions. The instrumentalization of all of these tools of economic warfare is the reason why you're seeing this shift. It's the thing that makes BRICS look attractive to a lot of countries and economies because of that very reason. Because the U.S. just can't reconcile a vision of a world that doesn't have itself on top. And the other thing I'll say from a U.S. political point of view — this isn't just a Republican problem or a Trump problem. Joe Biden could have reinitiated the JCPOA in his first term, and he did not. What does that tell you?

#Nima

Exactly.

#Patrick

There's plenty of Democrats that were frothing at the mouth for this war as well — Chuck Schumer and others at the top of that list, Nancy Pelosi. So, you know, the heads of the Democratic establishment wanted that war. And you know what? The thing I'll say as well, Nima, which I find extraordinary, is who's the one person in U.S. politics that's silent? Silent. Not even a tweet during this whole war sort of phase. It's the author of the JCPOA agreement himself, Barack Hussein Obama. Not even a tweet about Iran and about the war. And he's somebody who was given a Nobel Peace Prize before he even stepped into office, like he was some sort of, I don't know, angelic figure that was going to bring peace to the world. And nothing. So what does that tell you?

That's the titular head of the Democratic establishment in America. Can't even muster up a tweet. Against Trump and against this illegal war. What does that tell you? That there's nothing in terms of opposition. It's not there. There's a few people like, you know, Chris Van Hollen and the senator from Maryland, I believe, and a few others. Chris Murphy is just, to me, not serious because Chris Murphy was one of the architects of the Ukraine war. He stood alongside John McCain on the stage with literal Nazis in Kiev in December of 2013, revving up the crowd of far-right ultra-nationalists in Ukraine to rise up and do the Maidan, basically. That's Chris Murphy, the Democratic senator, who's pretending to be anti-war at the moment. He's just anti-Trump.

He's not anti-war. That's the other problem. You've got anti-Trump Democrats. Who are the genuine anti-war Democrats? There's very few of them. I can count them on less than one hand, just like the Republicans. So that's just part of the crisis, Nima, politically in America. And for the same reason, Nima, there's no chance of any deal with Iran, with this administration, and probably with the Democrats too, because they will never, ever be able to undo the sanctions legislation on Iran, ever. I don't think it's even possible. Unless there's some major revolution or something, like Trump gets thrown out of office and flees to Argentina to be with Milei or something. I don't know. If it was that extreme, then maybe you could get sanctions relief for Iran.

Beyond that, I just can't see it happening, which means there's going to be no deal. I mean, no political settlement. They might threaten to do it. They might sort of have half negotiations, and they might say they have a deal. They might meet in Pakistan or wherever, Geneva even. But they're not going to get it in the end because a U.S. deal is going to mean Iran cannot be sovereign as a state. And that's just not going to go with Iran. It's just not going to happen. They had that opportunity before. They did it with the JCPOA. Iran relinquished a certain amount of its sovereignty to keep the international community happy. And it's over. That was the best deal they're ever going to get, ever. They will never get a better deal than the JCPOA. I can say that 100%.

So Trump thinks he can. He wants to. He says he's not going to get it. Trump has just shown himself to be the con man and the chancer that everybody kind of suspected he was, and he's really shown it here. And they just keep regurgitating these BS lines that, oh, Iran can't be allowed to have a nuclear weapon. This is a straw man talking point here. They don't have one. They weren't pursuing one. The U.S.'s own intelligence assessment said they're not pursuing one. So they keep falling back on these straw men, and you can see Hegseth can't even defend it anymore. Even average Joe — when Joe the Plumber can deconstruct this straw man argument by Pete Hegseth — that's where we're getting.

We're nearly there in America, where Joe the Plumber will deconstruct that and embarrass all these sort of political elites. Then it's over. It's over at that point. So we're kind of rapidly reaching that point where the people are getting it. But the problem, Nima, again, it's the political class in America and in Europe. They're on a different page altogether than the public, for the most part. To be honest, a lot of Americans don't care about this war. They won't care until it's \$6-a-gallon gas. But we'll get there, and it'll be the summer, and it'll probably be a rallying cry for the midterms, and it might mean that they're going to flip the House and the Senate. The question is, what then? What happens when they flip the House and the Senate?

There'll be impeachments that might help to bring this war down a little bit in the Middle East. But as the U.S. withdraws, that doesn't mean Israel's going to slow down, does it? No, it doesn't. Israel will continue. In fact, they'll get worse. When the world's eyes go off the Middle East, that's when Israel gets busy ethnically cleansing and carrying out genocides. So it's because the focus has been on the region. I think they've had to be under more scrutiny. But look at, with all the attention on Iran, look

what Israel did in Lebanon. They took full advantage of that. That's what they do. That's what Israel does. That's been their pattern of behavior for decades. And the U.S. provides that distraction for Israel.

It happens so many times where the world is looking over here, and then Israel's incursions in Gaza, the West Bank, annexing settlements, invading, bombing, attacking, occupying — it's just constant throughout the decades, and they're doing it again. Israel's very strategic, and they're very conscious of the world media focus and eye, and they plan their military around the media coverage. Israel does not want to be the focus of the global media. That's why they support a U.S. war against Iran, and they're very actively trying to foment that. The Israeli lobby — it's in their interest to do that. And Israel, back at home, will take advantage of that to maximize their ambitions to build a Greater Israel project. And we're seeing that now. Now the focus is back on Lebanon. You can see problems for Israel politically now, again.

So Israel needs the focus to move. So that's another reason, Nima, why it's likely that their hostilities might resume against Iran, because Israel needs that focus to move away from its near abroad and all the focus being on Iran, and then all the victimhood of Tel Aviv getting pelted by Iranian missiles. That's where they want to shift things. Americans, Lebanon — that'll just be a back-page story, unfortunately. But yeah, the longer there's peace or there's a ceasefire that holds, the more focus on Lebanon. You can see the Europeans, Nima, they're being forced to make statements condemning Israel's brutality in Lebanon. So again, this makes it more urgent for Israel to move that focus away from Lebanon, and quick, because it's hurting them politically and internationally.

#Nima

Yeah. Thank you so much, Patrick. Please go to 21st Century Wire, and you can follow Patrick on his patrickhenningsen.substack.com. Right below his name, you can see that I'm going to put all the links in the description of this video. You can access his YouTube channel, and please go there and subscribe to his YouTube channel and help his channel grow. Thank you so much, Patrick, for being with us today.

#Patrick

Thanks, Nima. Appreciate it. Thank you. Take care.